

Artist's Statement

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Orlando et la tempête

Galerie Richard

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vernissage September 5th 5-8pm



Orlando in the Thicket of Sasha (2020) 30x30cm artificial life painting on canvas

Orlando et la tempête (Orlando and the Tempest) is a series of virus-modeled artificial life paintings I created between mid-2018 and early-2020 that indirectly addresses issues of gender plasticity within our tempestuous viral and social-political times by imagining nonexistent mythic scenes from the flippant 1928 novel *Orlando* by Virginia Woolf (the story of an aristocratic young male poet who transforms into a woman overnight and lives for 300 years).

Orlando et la tempête treats the fantastical and voluble story of Woolf's *Orlando* with corresponding puckish flippancy. But this playful flippancy is achieved by what I think of as the responsibility of long looking—a shift into a non-binary visual noise field where viewers can re-appropriate their capacity to visualize on a personal basis.

Storms have no gender and mean full-blow fluidity. In *Orlando et la tempête*, my ambiguous Orlando avatar (a regenerated Lazarus) is embedded into just such noisy chaotic grounds to the extent that normal figure/ground relationships more-or-less merge, playing elusively with what is seen, what is suggested, what is repressed, and what is desired. That starring pansexual *Orlando* avatar plays a painful hide-and-seek with the tempestuous, viral whipped, environment, that, in the end, is meant to suggest carnal mystic queries.

Long term influences on my pangender interests have been key works of Marcel Duchamp and Genesis Breyer P-Orridge's term (from the mid-80s) *panthropology*: a transhumanist multi-spectrum poly-androgynous concept that transcends gender labels. In 2000 I exhibited *Computer Virus Project II* artworks (with artist's statements) investigating virtual hermaphrodite complexity in my *ec-satyrical* 2000 exhibition, and again in my 2002 show *vOluptuary: an algorithmic hermaphromology*. I have continued to use viral, androgynous and trans forms in my work, since. In 2018, I penned a pansexual art theory paper entitled *Before and Beyond the Bachelor Machine* that was published in *Arts*.

As meticulously articulated in my book *Immersion Into Noise*, *Orlando et la tempête* utilizes aesthetic visual noise that puts representation and abstraction into interactive play by flipping the common figure/ground emphasis (to some extent) so that the eye must navigate and unpack the phantasmagorical pandemonium presented. This entails an intimate act of seeing and imaging on the part of the viewer, which the paintings' modest size encourages. As such, *Orlando et la tempête* dips under the surface of the turbulently shredding atmospherics of today to convey and encourage intimate fluid visualizations that resist social constraints.

Gender here is viewed as an act of becoming that fails to sustain sex oppression by ceasing to draw the boundaries of the Other. As such it is a provocation not only to male/female constructions of heterosexuality, but also to homosexual constructions of identity. This critique of 'representation' in the aesthetic sense is part of a critique of 'representation' in the political sense (and vice versa).

The pictures in the exhibition are created with custom C++ artificial life software modeled as a virus (made in collaboration with the French programmer Stéphane Sikora) and archival inkjet on Hahnemühle Daguerre canvas. The black node graph panels in some of the diptychs and triptychs were made in a manner similar to Markov chains, tracking the word *virus* in William S. Burroughs 1970 essay *The Electronic Revolution*. In that essay, Burroughs draws attention to the subversive influence of the word *virus* on humans and the dangers of using the human voice as a weapon. A script was written to analyze the text, where, for every transition from the word *virus* to another word *virus*, a link was drawn between the nodes corresponding to that recurring word. Then Graphviz, an open source graph visualization software, was used to generate the graph, which I then aesthetically treated.